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Understanding Italian Cheese

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Report Highlights:

Italy prides itself of being one of the world's leading cheese producers, with hundreds of different types of cheeses made from cow, goat, buffalo and sheep milk. There are currently 35 Italian cheeses that have the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status under European Union regulations. Italian cheese production has fluctuated in recent years but there has been a general trend upwards and in the long term a relatively strong domestic demand and expansion into export markets such as Russia should keep the Italian cheese market afloat.

General Information:

Overview of the Italian Cheese Market

Italy prides itself of being one of the world's leading cheese producers, with hundreds of different types of cheeses made from cow, goat, buffalo and sheep milk. There are currently 35 Italian cheeses that have the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status under European Union regulations. Prior to 1996 when the PDO system came into operation in Italy, many of the cheeses were regulated under a Denominazione di Origine (DO) system. These appellations of origin were recognized in a number of European countries with which Italy had bilateral agreements.

Italian cheese production has fluctuated in recent years but there has been a general trend upwards. From 2002-2004

average annual production was 1.086 million tons. From 2005-2007 annual production increased to 1.153 million tons. Industry sources forecast that from 2008-2013 annual cheese production is expected to increase, with production fluctuating between 1.18million to 1.21million tons. Growth in the short term will be affected by the recession both at home and with regard to export markets. In the long term a relatively strong domestic demand and expansion into export markets such as Russia should keep the Italian cheese market afloat.

<i>ITALY Cheese Production, Consumption & Trade</i>						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Cheese Production, '000 tons	1,189.4	1,204.0	1,204.8	1,205.3	1,198.5	1,183.7
Cheese Consumption, '000 tons	1,394.0	1,442.1	1,485.6	1,528.4	1,600.7	1,705.3
Cheese Net Trade Balance, '000 tons	-165.4	-169.7	-175.2	-180.6	-190.8	-205.3

Source: Eurostat, FAO

Classification of Italian Cheeses

According to Italian law (Royal Decree n. 2033 of 1925), following is the definition for cheese in Italy: «cheese is the product obtained from whole or partly skimmed milk, or from cream, after coagulation by acidification or by renneting, also using starter bacteria or kitchen salt».

Cheese is usually considered to be a milk derivative, and is therefore classified on the basis of the following:

- type of milk employed
- fat content
- consistency, depending on moisture content
- technology utilized during the cheese-making process and the temperature of the curd processing
- duration of ripening
- denomination of the product

► *Type of Milk used*

Cheeses can be made with any of the following:

- *cow milk cheeses*
- *sheep milk cheeses*
- *buffalo milk cheeses*
- *goat milk cheeses*

For cheeses not produced from cow milk, indication of the species is mandatory.

► *Fat Content*

Fat content of cheese is expressed on dry matter and are regulated by Italian Law n. 142/1992:

- *full-fat cheeses*: fat content expressed on dry matter over 35%;
- *light (or semi-fat) cheeses*: fat content varying between 20 and 35% on dry matter;
- *low-fat cheeses*: obtained from skimmed milk; fat content below 20% on dry matter.

Many of the Italian PDO cheeses are made from partly skimmed milk and their Product Specification only indicates a minimum fat content on dry matter. Many of these cheeses, originally classified as “semi-fat”, nowadays fall into the category of full-fat cheeses. This is due to the decrease of the legal minimum fat content in full-fat cheeses (from 42% to 35%) and the tendency to produce cheeses with higher fat content in order to increase yield and thus the economic benefit.

► *Cheese Consistency*

Cheese consistency depends on moisture content, and Italian cheeses are classified as follows:

- *Soft cheeses*: moisture content of over 45%
- *Semi-hard cheeses*: moisture content varying between 35 and 45%
- *Hard cheeses*: moisture content below 35%

Generally, moisture content for cheeses is not legally defined, and only in a few cases the Product Specification of the PDO cheeses require a minimum moisture content. Cheese consistency depends not only on moisture, but also on other parameters, such as fat content and the duration of ripening process.

► *Cheese Processing Technology*

The cheese processing technology and the temperature at which the curd is cooked results in the following classifications:

- *Raw cheeses*: obtained without applying any heat-treatment to the curd after coagulation
- *Semi-cooked cheeses*: curd is cooked at temperatures up to 48°C
- *Cooked cheeses*: curd is cooked at temperatures over 48°C

- **“Pasta Filata” (string cheeses):** characterized by a treatment of the curd with water at 70-90°C
- **Molded (or “Blue”) cheeses:** obtained from milk intentionally inoculated with mold spores which, growing inside the cheese body, contribute to ripening through specific enzymatic activities

▶ **Cheese Aging/Ripening Duration**

Aging is determined by the amount of time the cheese is allowed to rest from the time it is produced. It can range anywhere from fresh that can be consumed immediately to aged that must rest in proper storages for long periods, before it is ready for consumption. The aging/ripening of cheeses is classified as follows:

- **Fresh cheeses:** no ripening occurs; cheeses with no rind nor superficial microflora, which must be consumed within few days after production
- **Short-ripened cheeses:** ripening period up to 30 days
- **Medium-ripened cheeses:** ripening period up to 6 months
- **Long-ripened cheeses:** ripened over 6 months

Types of Italian Cheese Denominations

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PDO - Protected Denomination of Origin cheeses: As defined by Italian Law art. 2. L.10.4.54 n. 125 - “cheeses produced in well defined geographical areas, employing local, loyal and constant practices, which derive their distinctive characteristics principally from the particular conditions of the production environment.”

At present, this type of denomination is regulated and protected at the European Community level (Council Regulation (EC) N. 510/2006). (See Annex 1 for a complete list of Italian PDO cheeses).

PGI - Cheeses with Protected Geographical Indication: As defined by Italian Law *Com. I*, art. 2. L. 10.4.54 n. 125) - “cheeses produced on the national territory, employing loyal and constant practices, which derive their distinctive characteristics from peculiar characteristics of the raw materials and of the processing technology”.

Also this type of denomination is regulated and protected at the European Community level (Council Regulation (EC) N. 510/2006). Presently there are no Italian cheeses registered at the EU level with this type of denomination.

GTS - “Guaranteed Traditional Specialty” cheeses: As defined by EU Council Regulation (EC) N. 509/2006 - “cheeses produced according to a detailed traditional processing technology, but without any link to existing geographical areas, therefore allowing these cheeses to be produced throughout the national territory.

Only one cheese with this type of denomination is produced in Italy – Mozzarella.

Traditional regional cheeses: In Italy there are more than 450 ‘traditional regional’ cheeses.

The following table indicates for each cheese the year of PDO registration, the type of milk used and the approximate area within which the regulations permit it to be produced.

List of Italian PDO Cheeses

Name and styles	PDO	Milk	Regions	Production zone Provinces
Asiago	1996	Cow	Veneto	<u>Padua</u> , <u>Treviso</u> (part), <u>Vicenza</u> (part)
Asiago d'allevo "mezzano"			<u>Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol</u>	<u>Trento</u> (part)
Asiago pressato				
Bitto	1996	Cow (80%) Goat (20%)	<u>Lombardy</u>	<u>Bergamo</u> , <u>Sondrio</u>
<u>Bra dura tenera di Alpeggio</u>	1996	Cow	<u>Piedmont</u>	<u>Cuneo</u> , <u>Turin</u>
<u>Caciocavallo Silano</u>	1996	Cow	<u>Calabria</u>	<u>Crotone</u> , <u>Catanzaro</u> , <u>Cosenza</u>
			<u>Campania</u>	<u>Avellino</u> , <u>Benevento</u> , <u>Caserta</u> , <u>Naples</u>
Canestrato Pugliese	1996	Sheep	<u>Molise</u>	(Entire territory)
			<u>Puglia</u>	<u>Bari</u> , <u>Taranto</u> , <u>Brindisi</u>
			<u>Basilicata</u>	<u>Matera</u> , <u>Potenza</u>
Casatella Trevigiana	2008	Cow	Veneto	<u>Province of Foggia</u> <u>Treviso</u>
<u>Casciotta d'Urbino</u>	1996	Sheep (70%–80%) Cow (20%–30%)	<u>Marche</u>	Province of <u>Pesaro and Urbino</u>
<u>Castelmagno</u>	1996	Cow Sheep and/or Goat (optionally a little)	<u>Piedmont</u>	<u>Cuneo</u>
<u>Fiore Sardo</u>	1996	Sheep	<u>Sardinia</u>	<u>Cagliari</u> , <u>Nuoro</u> , <u>Oristano</u> , <u>Sassari</u>
<u>Fontina</u>	1996	Cow	<u>Aosta Valley</u>	(Entire territory)
Formai de Mut dell'Alta Valle Brembana	1996	Cow	<u>Lombardy</u>	<u>Bergamo</u>
<u>Gorgonzola</u>	1996	Cow	<u>Piedmont</u>	<u>Novara</u> , <u>Vercelli</u> ,
			<u>Lombardy</u>	<u>Bergamo</u> , <u>Brescia</u> , <u>Como</u> , <u>Cremona</u> , <u>Lodi</u> , <u>Milan</u> , <u>Pavia</u> <u>Lodi</u> , <u>Bergamo</u> , <u>Brescia</u> ,
			<u>Lombardy</u>	<u>Como</u> , <u>Cremona</u> , <u>Mantova</u> (to the north of the <u>Po</u>), <u>Milan</u> , <u>Pavia</u> , <u>Sondrio</u> , <u>Lecco</u> , <u>Varese</u>
<u>Grana Padano</u>	1996	Cow	<u>Piedmont</u>	<u>Alessandria</u> , <u>Asti</u> , <u>Cuneo</u> ,
			<u>Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol</u>	<u>Novara</u> , <u>Turin</u> , <u>Vercelli</u>
			<u>Veneto</u>	<u>Trento</u>
			<u>Emilia-Romagna</u>	<u>Padua</u> , <u>Rovigo</u> , <u>Treviso</u> , <u>Venice</u> , <u>Verona</u> , <u>Vicenza</u> <u>Bologna</u> (east of the <u>Reno</u>), <u>Ferrara</u> , <u>Forli-Cesena</u> , <u>Piacenza</u> , <u>Ravenna</u> , <u>Rimini</u>

<u>Montasio</u>	1996	Cow	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	<u>Udine</u> , <u>Pordenone</u> , <u>Gorizia</u> , <u>Trieste</u>
<u>Monte Veronese</u>	1996	Cow	Veneto	<u>Belluno</u> , Treviso, Padua, Venice
<u>Mozzarella di Bufala Campana</u>	1996	Buffalo	Campania	Caserta, <u>Salerno</u> , Naples, Benevento,
Murazzano	1986	Sheep (60%– 100%) Cow (0%–40%)	<u>Lazio</u> Piedmont	<u>Frosinone</u> , <u>Latina</u> , <u>Rome</u> Province of Cuneo
<u>Parmigiano-Reggiano</u>	1996	Cow	Emilia-Romagna	<u>Modena</u> , <u>Parma</u> , <u>Reggio</u> <u>Emilia</u> , Bologna (west of the Reno)
Pecorino di Filiano	2007	Sheep	Lombardy Basilicata Lazio	Mantova (south of the Po) <u>Potenza</u> Rome
<u>Pecorino Romano</u>	1996	Sheep	<u>Tuscany</u> Sardinia	<u>Grosseto</u> Cagliari, Nuoro, Oristano, Sassari
<u>Pecorino Sardo</u>	1996	Sheep	Sardinia	Cagliari, Nuoro, Oristano, Sassari
<u>Pecorino Siciliano</u>	1996	Sheep	<u>Sicily</u>	(Entire territory)
Pecorino Toscano	1996	Sheep	Tuscany	<u>Arezzo</u> , <u>Pisa</u> , <u>Massa Carrara</u> , <u>Livorno</u> , Grosseto, <u>Firenze</u> , <u>Prato</u> , <u>Lucca</u> , <u>Pistoia</u> , <u>Siena</u>
Provolone Valpadana	1996	Cow	Lombardy Veneto Emilia-Romagna Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, Mantova, Milan Padua, Rovigo, Verona, Vicenza Piacenza Trento
Quartirollo Lombardo	1996	Cow	Lombardy	Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lodi, Milan, Pavia, Varese
Ragusano	1996	Cow Cow	Sicily	Ragusa, Syracuse
<u>Raschera</u>	1996	Sheep and/or Goat (optionally a little)	Piedmont	Cuneo
Ricotta Romana	2005	Cow (max 85%)	<u>Lazio</u>	(Entire territory)
Robiola di Roccaverano	1996	Sheep and/or Goat (min 15%)	Piedmont	Provinces of Alessandria, Asti
Sopressa delle Giudicarie	2003	Cow	Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	Western Trentino
Stelvio or Stilfser	2007	Cow	Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	<u>Bolzano-Bozen</u>
<u>Taleggio</u>	1996	Cow	Lombardy Veneto Piedmont	Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lodi, Milan, Pavia Treviso Novara
<u>Toma Piemontese</u>	1996	Cow	Piedmont	Alessandria, Asti, <u>Biella</u> , Cuneo, Novara, Turin, Vercelli

Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo (or Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo)	1996	Cow	Aosta Valley	(Entire territory)
Valtellina casera	1996	Cow	Lombardy	Sondrio

Source: Assolatte – Italian
Milk/Dairy Association

Italian
Cheese Production in 2008 (tons)

PRODUCT	Type of Milk used	Tons of milk used	Tons of product produced
<i>Cheeses</i>			
Grana Padano	C	2,295,159	163,341
Mozzarella	C	1,789,200	223,650
Parmigiano Reggiano	C	1,707,799	116,064
Crescenza	C	498,150	81,000
Gorgonzola	C	412,000	48,720
Other hard cheeses	C	198,800	14,000
Caciotte	C	207,000	23,000
Other fresh and soft cheeses	C	238,000	28,000
Asiago	C	215,684	23,318
Provolone	C	175,974	17,920
Other string cheeses	C	108,350	11,000
Provolone Valpadana	C	95,100	9,600
Italico	C	80,820	9,000
Montasio	C	67,275	7,349
Taleggio	C	65,265	8,800
Mascarpone	C	51,750	9,000
Fontina	C	38,714	3,747
Quartirolo Lombardo	C	30,829	3,693
Valtellina Casera	C	15,100	1,360
Caciocavallo Silano	C	9,100	750
Toma Piemontese	C	15,914	1,391
Monte Veronese	C	5,981	568
Ragusano	C	1,998	180
Spresa delle giudicarie	C	1,772	149
Formai de mut	C	708	71
Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo	C	57	5
Stelvio	C	10,215	1,112
Pecorino Romano	S	170,112	29,461
Formaggi ovini non DOP	S	180,000	30,000
Pecorino Sardo	S	12,113	1,960
Pecorino Toscano	S	15,965	2,816
Fiore Sardo	S	3,025	605
Canestrato Pugliese	S	431	75
Pecorino Siciliano	S	298	53
Mozzarella di bufala campana	B	135,831	31,960
Mozzarella di bufala	B	48,240	11,350
Formaggi di capra	C	91,000	9,100
Raschera	C(S/C)	7,860	786

Bra	C(S/C)	7,825	762
Bitto	C/C	2,900	290
Castelmagno	C(S/C)	1,890	197
Casciotta di Urbino	C/S	1,582	229
Robiola di Roccaverano	C/S/C	981	99
Murazzano	S/C	108	21
Other mixes cheeses	CSCB	535,820	79,817
Milk based products			
Yogurt	C	224,000	200,000
Other milk based products	C	840,000	140,000
TOTAL	C	10,616,695	1,346,369

C=cow milk
S=sheep milk
G=goat milk
B=buffalo milk
C/S=cow and sheep milk

Source: Assolatte – Italian Milk/Dairy Association

Italian DOP Cheese Production in 2008 (tons)

<i>Cheeses</i>	<i>Production 2008</i>	<i>Amount of milk used</i>
Grana Padano	163,341	2,295,159
Parmigiano Reggiano	116,064	1,707,799
Gorgonzola	48,720	412,000
Mozzarella di Bufala Campana	31,960	135,831
Pecorino Romano	29,461	170,112
Asiago	23,318	215,684
Provolone Valpadana	9,600	95,100
Taleggio	8,800	65,265
Montasio	7,349	67,275
Fontina	3,747	38,714
Quartirolo Lombardo	3,693	30,829
Pecorino Toscano	2,816	15,965
Pecorino Sardo	1,960	12,113
Toma Piemontese	1,391	15,914
Valtellina Casera	1,360	15,100
Stelvio	1,112	10,215
Raschera	786	7,860
Bra	762	7,825
Caciocavallo Silano	750	9,100
Fiore Sardo	605	3,025
Monte Veronese	568	5,981
Bitto	290	2,900
Casciotta d'Urbino	229	1,582
Castelmagno	197	1,890

Ragusano	180	1,998
Spessa delle Giudicarie	149	1,772
Robiola di Roccaverano	99	981
Canestrato Pugliese	75	431
Formai de Mut	71	708
Pecorino Siciliano	53	298
Murazzano	21	108
Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo	5	57
Total	459,532	5,349,591

Source: Assolatte – Italian Milk/Dairy Association